

Walk the Line

Institutional corrections jobs are well-suited for front-line troopers.

by Matt Pavelek

Trousers with razor-sharp creases, a crisply starched shirt, badges and insignias properly positioned and shoes polished and buffed to a mirror shine. Sounds like a military dress uniform right?

Actually, this is the process many civilian men and women go through when getting ready to go to work in the security industry; many of whom have either been or still serve in the military.

Juan Castro, 48, currently works for the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation's (CDCR) Dewitt Nelson

Division of Juvenile Justice in Stockton, Calif. Castro served 20 years in the Marine Corps before becoming a corrections officer. He served from 1975 through 1996 during which time he served with the Second Force Reconnaissance and also served as a drill instructor at Parris Island. Castro described how his job as a corrections officer compares to his military experience.

"The similarities are that you have to be ready to act and make decisions in a timely manner, take pride in your appearance and be physically fit," Castro said. "Most importantly, you have to be a team player."

Robert L. Dusel Sr., 58, is currently a captain (Corrections Officer IV) with the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections and serves as the critical incident management coordinator and assistant chief of security for the Central Office. Dusel also served two tours in Vietnam during his eight years of service as an MP in the U. S. Army and the National Guard.

"Corrections is a semi-military structured organization," Dusel said. "There are many similarities: discipline, pride in oneself in position, personal appearance; individual stature and demeanor are all a part of the organization."

Raymond Jack is a youth correctional counselor with the Juvenile Justice Division of CDCR (www.cdcr.ca.gov) and is also a staff sergeant with the a U.S. Army Reserve training support battalion in the 104th

Division out of Sacramento.

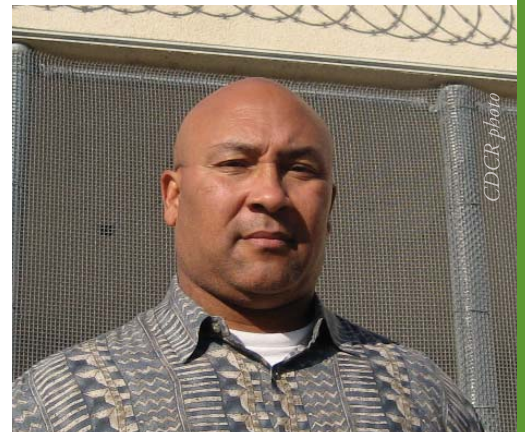
Jack began his career in the security industry working on California's Death Row at San Quentin State Prison. He described his eight years serving as tier, canteen and safety officer as "intriguing."

"Safety and security is always a concern in corrections, particularly when dealing with condemned inmates," Jack said.

Jack also said adult inmates were more mature and stable because they were aware of the consequences of rule violations. Inmates are issued a Title 15 manual which clearly explains their rights and responsibilities. Although working with juvenile offenders is more challenging, Jack said this



*Juan Castro
Dewitt Nelson Division of Juvenile Justice
U.S. Marine Corps (1975-1996)*



*Raymond Jack
Youth Correctional Counselor
California Department of Corrections & Rehabilitation
U.S. Army Reserve*

phase of his career offers more possibilities for the inmates.

"The affect you have on an individual because of your presence, appearance and training can allow you to change a youthful offender's life around for the better," Jack said. "It's a great feeling knowing I helped someone become a productive member of society."

The skills and discipline ingrained in all members of the military go hand-in-hand with what it takes to be effective in the security industry. Kevin Brew, special assistant to commissioner of the Alaska Department of Corrections (www.correct.state.ak.us), said veterans often display attributes employers look for in potential corrections officers.

"The Department of Corrections is not a military organization, but I would say it's a paramilitary organization," Brew said. "Veterans tend to have a good ability to deal with people and also give and take orders."

Jack Karver, a retired program administrator who now serves as a recruiter for CDCR, agrees with Brew about veterans seamlessly transitioning in the corrections industry.



Alaska Department of Corrections

"Veterans have always transferred well into our department," Karver said. "We are somewhat militaristic by means of our position titles, uniforms and needed structure to ensure the safety of staff and inmates," he said. "Military staff (members) are very mature and find the work very rewarding. The training they received while in the military makes it very easy for them to understand correctional science. They always excel in the academy and throughout their careers."

According to the U. S. Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics

(www.bls.gov) the outlook for job opportunities for correctional officers is expected to be excellent. There is a need to replace correctional officers who leave the labor force, in addition to the fact that there is an increasing demand for qualified employees.

This demand should generate thousands of job openings each year. In fact, the demand is so high in some places that some local and state correctional agencies are having trouble attracting and keeping qualified employees.

"We plan on hiring approximately 4,200 corrections officers over the next year or so," Karver said.

The pay rates and benefits for corrections officers vary from state to state, but across the country the average yearly salary of correctional officers and jailers was \$33,600 in May 2004. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, the middle 50 percent earned between \$26,560 and \$44,200 and the top 10 percent earned in excess of \$54,820. Starting salaries and benefit packages are slightly higher than average in Alaska and California.

"The state of Alaska is very generous," Brew said. The entry level pay for a corrections officer one (CO1) is \$17 per hour in Anchorage and \$22.79 in Nome. He said the progression from CO1 to CO2 takes between 12 and 15 months and offers a significant pay increase, climbing to \$19.27 per hour in Anchorage and \$25.83 in Nome. Brew also discussed the work schedule.

"Most, but not all of our officers work one week on and one week off," Brew said.

In California, corrections officers can expect to make \$3,050 per month at the entry level in the academy and it goes up

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considerably after they graduate. Karver said veterans are well adapted to the academy and have demonstrated success.

"All peace officers attend a 16-week academy that does an excellent job preparing staff for a career in our facilities," Jack said. "Veterans tend to breeze through."

He also said the pay raise is rather considerable after a few years experience.

"Entry level peace officers can expect to earn about \$73,000 a year after five years," Karver said.

Donna F. Ratulowski, agency recruitment coordinator, said that the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania provides a full range of benefits for regular salaried (full-time) employees and on a prorated basis for qualified part-time employees. These benefits include health insurance, life insurance, workers compensation, retirement, deferred compensation, and an attractive leave program.

The salaries vary significantly, but depending on the job title, they range from \$21,500 to more than \$100,000.

"Because our business is paramilitary, veterans are a good fit," Ratulowski said.



"They already possess much of the initiative, discipline, and problem solving skills that are required in this environment."

Brew made a point of mentioning the fact that although the pay and benefits are rewarding, working in corrections is serious business.

"There are some potentially hazardous situations that people need to be aware of," Brew said. "Officers work in close quarters with prisoners and

other staff. Our facilities are well run, however."

He also said that is also one of the main reasons why veterans' military experience makes them valuable and prepared to handle these types of situations.

"There is a definitive rank structure and there are well defined policies and procedures. Some military occupations come in with incredible situational awareness and that's essential for what we do here," Brew said.

Jack explained how his life as a corrections officer compares with his duties as a soldier.

"I enjoy my military life in comparison to my civilian career," Jack said. "My civilian career is hectic from day to day due to the lifestyle that comes with dealing with youthful offenders that are incarcerated."

Jack said this hectic environment is created by the dangers presented in a juvenile correctional facility.

"The gang lifestyle and beliefs that offenders portray makes it difficult to provide a treatment atmosphere," Jack said. "Offenders have a difficult time following simple instructions from authority figures."

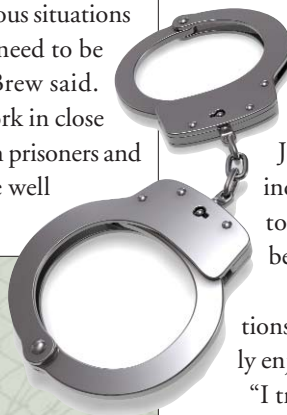
This is in sharp contrast to the rank structure and efficiency Jack has come to expect in his combined 17 years (six years of which were active duty) of military experience.

"In the military subordinates handle following instructions effortlessly without being anti-authoritative," Jack said. "The mindset of an individual in the military is a protocol that all members follow to be successful as a team member."

Although working in corrections is challenging, Jack thoroughly enjoys his job.

"I truly enjoy my career as a Youth Corrections Counselor because of the daily challenges it offers and the camaraderie of working with a professional staff," Jack said. "For someone who is a self-motivated, self-starter and has the desire to be a team player while earning a great salary and good retirement benefits, I would definitely recommend this career to veterans."

James P. Zaccarelli, 42, served six years in the Army's 1st Armored Division and now works as a captain (corrections officer



Average Salaries of Corrections Jobs 2004

Correctional Officers (State and Federal)	\$33,600
Public Sector (Federal)	\$44,700
Public Sector (State)	\$33,750
Public Sector (Local)	\$33,080
First-line Supervisors/Managers	\$44,720

Average Salaries of Security Jobs 2004

Elementary and Secondary Schools	\$25,030
General Medical and Surgical Hospitals	\$24,750
Local Government	\$23,690
Traveler Accommodation	\$21,710
Investigation and Security Services	\$19,030

Source: U. S. Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics www.bls.gov

IV) and facility security coordinator with the Security Division of the Pennsylvania Dept. of Corrections (www.cor.state.pa.us) Central Office. Unlike Jack, Zaccarelli appreciates the fact that although working in corrections is similar to the military, it is somewhat less stringent.

"Military life was much more regimented," Zaccarelli said. "Being a corrections officer allows for more personal time and educational opportunities. I was able to complete my bachelor's degree while working for the department. A good portion of this was because of the contacts I made in the department."

Castro echoed his sentiments about the rewarding nature of his career in corrections.

"The thing that I love most about my job is that you are in constant learning mode," Castro opined. "I would definitely recommend a career in corrections to any veteran. It is a career that will allow you to use the knowledge and experience gained in the military." ★

Job Security

Security guard jobs offer another opportunity for vets interested in the security industry.

Security guards in both the public and the private sector represent a major part of the labor force in the security industry. According to the U. S. Department of Labor, there were more than one million security guards and gaming surveillance officers employed in 2004.

AlliedBarton Security Services (www.alliedbarton.com), is the largest American-owned security officer services company, according to its Web site. The company has been around since 1957 and employs more than 47,000 people.

Meredith Brogdon, a district support manager for AlliedBarton, said that in her experience, veterans make great employees.

"We do like to hire veterans," Brogdon said. "They are generally very committed and professional. They have an incredible work ethic and are very hard working. They are also dependable, reliable and trustwor-

thy."

AlliedBarton offers security services in a number of markets, including: colleges and universities, commercial real estate, government services, healthcare, residential communities, manufacturing and industrial and financial institutions as well as shopping centers and other retail facilities. AlliedBarton has more than 100 offices in the U.S. and boasts approximately 3,700 customers, 175 of which are *Fortune* 500 companies.

The GEO Group Inc. (www.thegeogroupinc.com) is a world leader in privatized correctional and detention management. It also offers a wide range of other diversified services - from home detention and electronic monitoring to the development of medical and mental health facilities and also has more than 10,000 employees.

Nationwide, more than half of all jobs for security guards were in investigation and security services, including guard and armored car services. Some organizations employ security guards as needed on a contract basis. However, the majority of other security officers are directly employed by governments, colleges, healthcare facilities, restaurants, hotels, malls and stores, manufacturing firms and real estate.

The average national annual salary for security guards was \$20,320 in May 2004, but the top 10 percent earned in excess of \$33,270. The average national annual salary for gaming surveillance officers was \$25,840 with the top 10 percent earning more than \$42,420, according to the Dept. of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics (www.bls.gov).

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- Link to the 2006 Industry Profile on the Security Industry for additional employment leads in the corrections field.